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ABSTRACT

The paper examines issues in the delivery of educational services to behaviorally impaired children and youth in Nebraska. Separate chapters focus on five problem areas, (professionalism, continuum of services within education, continuum of services across community agencies, interagency communication, and attitudes/expectations), each with an overview of the situation and suggestions for possible solutions. The effects of lack of administrative support, systematic information sharing, and professional direction on teacher performance are explored in the chapter on professionalism. Suggestions to promote professionalism touch on inservice needs and clarity in program goals and teacher responsibility. Among problems cited regarding a continuum of services are lack of regular education alternatives and insufficient curriculum options at the secondary level. Alternative interventions for students at the building level are recommended, as is development of a teacher assistance team. The need for coordination of services beyond school is cited, and recommendations touch upon planning and financial issues. To remedy obstacles to interagency communication and collaboration, the report suggests emphasis on uniform data collection and information sharing across agencies. In a final area of difficulty, that of attitudes and expectations, suggestions are offered for enhancing community and educator understanding of the population. (CL)

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BEHAVIORALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN NEBRASKA

Perspectives on the Status of Services

EC 162168

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WORKING PAPER:

BEHAVIORALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN NEBRASKA

PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATUS OF SERVICES

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PREFACE

The project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders began its work in 1979 by collecting, reviewing, synthesizing, and disseminating information on the "state of the art" relative to services for behavior disordered children and youth. In particular, the project focused on severe behavior disorders, adolescent behavior disorders, and human resource issues in behavior disorders. Those findings were published in a series of documents: one document on each of the three topics; an introductory document outlining the needs analysis model; and a symposium proceedings on the topic of leadership training in the area of behavior disorders.

As of September, 1981, the project began broadening its emphasis by applying the results of its previous work to inservice training for leadership personnel in the area of behavior disorders. As part of that effort, the project is: (a) providing technical assistance to a limited number of states including Nebraska, relative to improving services to behavior disordered children and youth; and (b) producing and disseminating a series of working papers which relate to some of the specific concerns encountered in the project's early work. This working paper is the result of a combination of both the technical assistance and publication efforts.

One final note of explanation is in order. While the National Needs Analysis Project has used the term "behavior disorders" throughout its previous activities and publications (the rationale for which has been thoroughly discussed in those publications), this report utilizes the term behaviorally impaired. This does not represent a change in project philosophy. Rather, since behaviorally impaired is the legal terminology of the state of Nebraska and because the document is intended for use in that state, its usuage seems most appropriate.

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PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATUS OF SERVICES TO BEHAVIORALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN NEBRASKA

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since its inception, the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders has focused upon issues, problems, and concerns related to the field of behavior disorders. The impetus for the project itself arose out of the continued and growing concern by professionals: parents, teachers, administrators, teacher trainers, and national leaders regarding the staggering numbers of children who are handicapped by virtue of disordered behavior and who are unserved and/or inappropriately served. The National Needs Analysis Project began its data collection phase by exploring a variety of issues which were selected as being of paramount importance to the field of behavior disorders. As the data collection progressed, additional issues were included which reflected repeatedly reiterated concerns of the professionals interviewed as part of the data collection process. Table 1 depicts a summary of the range of issues explored by the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders and is organized according to the three major parameters (adolescent behavior disorders, severe behavior disorders, and human resources) around which the project's findings were grouped. Also indicated on the Table are those issues which are treated within this working paper. All of this is presented in order to provide readers with a framework within which to place the content of the information presented within this paper. While hardly consolatory, it does bear noting that the problems confronting professionals in the area of behavior impairment in Nebraska are reflective of those facing the field elsewhere across the nation.

As indicated in the Preface, since fall 1981, the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders has expanded its overall direction to include

Table 1

Issues Examined As Part of the

National Needs Analysis Project and the Nebraska Working Paper

Issue	National Needs Analysis Project			Nebraska Paper
	Adolescent Behavior Disorders	Severe Behavior Disorders	Human Resources	
Definition	X	X		
Supply/Demand of Personnel				
Prevalence of BD Children	X	X	X	
Unserved Estimates	X	X	X	
Teacher Certification	X	X	X	
Ancillary Personnel	X	X	X	
Attrition/Burnout	X	X	X	X
Service Delivery				
Public Schools	X	X	X	X
Mental Health	X	X	X	X
Facilities for Neglected and Delinquent	X	X	X	X
Collaborative Programs	X	X	X	X
Bilingual Programs			X	
Training: Preservice/Inservice				
Content	X	X	X	X
Numbers Trained	X	X	X	
Public Schools	X	X	X	
Mental Health/Neglected and Delinquent	X	X	X	
Conceptualization of	X	X	X	
Other				
Recruitment			X	
Incentives			X	
Categorical vs. Non-categorical Certification			X	
Related Services	X	X	X	X
Advocacy	X	X	X	X
Assets to Services	X	X	X	
Obstacles to Services	X	X	X	X
Violence and Beh. Disorders	X			X
Vocational Programs	X			
Graduation Requirements	X			
Services to Handicapped Offenders 18-21	X			
Autism		X		
Severity and Placement		X		
Single Line of Responsibility	X	X	X	X

the application of the results of its previous work to the inservice training of leadership personnel in behavior disorders. This broadening emphasis was in direct response to concerns expressed regarding (a) the dearth of personnel in leadership positions in state and local education agencies and other public agencies such as mental health and corrections who have background training and/or experience in the area of behavior disorders, (b) the lack of inservice training specifically designed for those few leadership personnel who have responsibility for programs in behavior disorders, and (c) the overwhelming void of interagency collaboration relative to service delivery for the behavior disordered in a field which is characterized as in need of such programming. By providing inservice training to leadership personnel across a variety of agencies serving the behaviorally impaired population, it was hoped that better statewide and local service delivery to behaviorally impaired students would be effected for all service environments, i.e., public schools, mental health facilities, and/or correctional facilities.

Part of the mechanism for implementing the expanded emphasis of the National Needs Analysis Project was to select a group of states to participate in leadership training and to establish a cadre of selected professionals from each state who represented a wide range of leadership personnel responsible for behaviorally impaired children in a variety of settings. Each state cadre is headed by the individual who functions as the state education agency consultant in the area of behavior disorders/behavior impairment. The remaining participants represent a wide range of professional roles including: college and university teacher trainers in the area of behavior impairment; directors of programs for the behaviorally impaired for local education agencies (LEAs); program directors for mental health facilities; program directors for correctional facilities; various state education agency (SEA)

personnel such as those responsible for the state's comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD), specialists in program evaluation and persons assigned to policy development; state directors for Health and Social Services; and teachers of classes for behaviorally impaired (BI) children and youth.

Nebraska, as one of the states participating in the inservice leadership training sponsored by the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders, organized its state cadre with the aforementioned representation in mind. Specific membership on the Nebraska state cadre includes the SEA consultant in the area of behavior impairment, one individual from a university teacher training program in behavior impairment, one education service unit (ESU) supervisor of programs for behaviorally impaired children and youth, one representative each from a mental health facility and a correction facility, two teachers of classrooms for behaviorally impaired students, and one representative of the Support System Project for Behaviorally Impaired, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

As part of its initial activities, each state cadre, including Nebraska, generated a list of state needs, goals, and potential activities based on its members' perspectives. These elements, i.e., needs, goals, and activities, combined to form a state plan which serves to guide the work of each state cadre across the three years constituting the life of the project. Since October 1981, the Nebraska cadre has met three times to design and implement the various activities which composed its state plan. Among the activities incorporated into the Nebraska plan was the development and dissemination of a working paper on the major issues confronting the field of behavior impairment in that state. Staff from the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders have participated with the Nebraska cadre, hopefully in a facilitative manner, in the formation of this paper as well as in the implementation of its other state plan activities.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this paper is to explore several major issues surrounding the delivery of services to behaviorally impaired children and youth in Nebraska. Included in that exploration is not only an examination of the problems but also a presentation of possible solutions which would contribute to the resolution of the problems.

It is not the intent of the paper to present a definitive delineation of all the problems facing professionals serving behaviorally impaired children and youth in Nebraska. Quite the opposite is true. The emphasis is upon the most pressing, most severe problems. Even with that perspective in mind, the Nebraska cadre, when developing the paper, generated a rather extensive list of "major" problems, which were then, by consensus, categorized into the five issues presented herein.

Thus, readers may take issue with the selection of the five problems designated as major ones. Or they may disagree with the parameters of the problems described or the solutions suggested. Such disagreement is welcomed. The spirit behind any working paper is that it serves as a stimulus for further thought and discussion. In that respect, this paper is no different. The developers sincerely hope that the paper will stimulate professionals in Nebraska regardless of the environment and/or role in which they serve behaviorally impaired children and youth to evaluate the problems and solutions presented herein from their own perspective. Reactions, whether or not in agreement, might well be shared with appropriate others, e.g., state education agency personnel; supervisory and administrative personnel in charge of local programs for behaviorally impaired students; the Support System Project for Behaviorally Impaired, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders, University of Missouri-Columbia.

Audience

Given the purpose of this document, the information presented may be of interest to a variety of professionals serving behaviorally impaired children and youth in Nebraska. It should have specific utility for (a) teachers of behaviorally impaired children across a variety of service delivery environments; (b) supervisors and administrators of programs for behaviorally impaired students in public schools, private schools, and mental health or correctional facilities; (c) teacher trainers in institutions of higher education (IHE) having personnel preparation programs in the area of behavior impairment; and (d) SEA supervisors and administrators in special education. It is also probable that the content of this working paper will be of interest to some professionals in education in general. Building prinicipals, for example, may find several of the chapters helpful if they have programs for behaviorally impaired students within their building. All of these groups should find the information of use as they evaluate existing service delivery programs for children who are behaviorally impaired, design and implement new programs for that population, develop and clarify policy related to the behaviorally impaired student and plan and conduct training of personnel to teach/serve the behaviorally impaired. It is the eventual intent that this working paper be disseminated to all the aforementioned groups of professionals in Nebraska.

Because the working paper emanated from the relationship between the Nebraska cadre and the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders, it will also be disseminated to professionals outside of Nebraska. Cadre members from other states which are participating in the Needs Analysis Project will be provided copies, as will the appropriate personnel from the Division of Personnel Preparation, Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, which provides the financial support for the project on National Needs Analysis in Behavior Disorders.

Organization

This document is divided into seven chapters. In addition to the Introduction and Conclusion, which are broad in perspective and scope, there are five chapters with topical emphasis. Each of these five chapters addresses one major problem related to delivery of services to behaviorally impaired children and youth in Nebraska. Within each chapter readers will find: (a) a discussion of the basic problem and its various parameters, including examples of that problem as it exists within Nebraska today; and (b) possible solutions and/or resources to be used in resolution of the problem. While the structure of each "topical" chapter is similar, each must be viewed as autonomous, because the process utilized in the writing of these chapters involved five independent teams of individuals. While the Nebraska cadre, as a group, agreed upon the general content for each chapter, the actual writing was done by subsets of individuals within the cadre. Therefore, each "topical" chapter stands independent of the others. Such a separation, while practical for the organizational purposes of the paper, probably does not represent the reality of the field of behavior impairment as it exists and fucntions in Nebraska. The developers of the paper are fully aware of the interrelatedness of these chapters and have attempted to address this as appropriate throughout the paper.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONALISM

Description of the Problem

Many variables affect a teacher's job of educating behaviorally impaired students within Nebraska. When positive, these variables tend to make the task rewarding, challenging and downright fun. Teachers find themselves doing things such as: waking up before their alarms go off; arriving at school earlier; looking forward to seeing the students in their charge; going the extra distance for a troubled student and wondering how the day slipped past so fast. Where these variables are negative, however, the task of teaching "hard-to-teach" students becomes a tiresome, frustrating experience. Teachers find themselves simply hanging on until the weekend, hoping that the most difficult student will be sick again today, retreating from contact with colleagues and basking in contagious misery.

Unfortunately, the tenor of the times and literature leads us to believe that this latter set of variables is becoming increasingly common. Daily exposure to frustrating situations, without equal exposure to positive, rewarding ones, has an eroding effect on a teacher's confidence which may, in turn, affect teaching skills. If teachers are continuously subjected to these frustrating situations, it is obvious that the quality of services available to behaviorally impaired students will be affected.

In this chapter three factors which contribute significantly to a teacher's ability to educate behaviorally impaired students will be explored. While there are other such variables affecting teacher performance, these three are felt to be the most crucial. The three variables are lack of: administrative support, systematic information sharing, and professional direction. Each is briefly described below.

Lack of Administrative Support. Principals and other administrators play a key role in any school. His/her educational philosophies, discipline procedures, relationships with parents, children, and teachers together set the tone of a school's personality. Since passage of Public Law 94-142, the role of the building principal has added yet another dimension, that of a participant in special education decisions. Principals are often key decision-makers in such areas as: (a) building referral process for behaviorally impaired (or any handicapped) student; (b) the nature and location of a class for behaviorally impaired students within a building; and (c) whether or not a class for behaviorally impaired students will be established in that building.

Given this expanded role in relationship to special education, it is important that building administrators have a clear and consistent understanding of programs for behaviorally impaired students. The professional preparation of principals does not include such components. That fact coupled with the lack of opportunity for direct experience with BI programs has resulted in a situation in which many of today's principals are without a specific BI knowledge base; yet, they find themselves responsible for overseeing such programs and integrating them into the overall range of services available in their building. In such a situation, it may be difficult for even the most well-intentioned principal to provide adequate and appropriate administrative support. What results is frustration on the part of both administrators and teachers.

Unfortunately the lack of an adequate information base relative to behavior impairment is not the only factor contributing to insufficient administrative support. Equally influential is the principal's attitude. Positive attitudes toward behaviorally impaired students are crucial in the implementation and success of a BI program. Some building administrators simply do no want these students in their buildings. Behaviorally impaired

students are not generally viewed as pleasant youth. They are frequent rule breakers and, as such, cause principals (and assistant principals) an inordinate number of headaches. They certainly contribute to the "who needs it" syndrome becoming more prevalent in today's schools. While the reason may be attitudinal, the results produced are the same: lack of administrative support for the BI programs in the building.

Lack of Systematic Information Sharing. Currently, within Nebraska, serious problems exist relative to the exchange of information among programs and teachers in the area of behavior impairment. Often, data and information collected in a student's previous educational setting do not reach the educational setting in which the student is currently functioning. This includes such information as assessment data, observational data, anecdotal records, academic records, IEPs, and successful and unsuccessful behavior management strategies. Obviously, a delay in, or absense of, information sharing is not only inefficient, it also raises some ethical issues relative to service delivery. Such issues would include the impairment of a teacher's ability to teach a student without benefit of information on the success or failure of previous instructional strategies. Such lack or delay of information sharing means a teacher must have a wide array of options in his/her "bag-of-educational-tricks" in order to be adequately prepared to cope with students who simply show up at the door sans records. This approach may work, but more often than not, results in weeks of wasted time for a student who does not have time to spare.

Two other variables exacerbate the need for teachers in the area of behavior impairment to have a more systematic exchange of information. First, many BI teachers operating within a particular school may be the only such teacher in the building and possibly the district. They do not have the luxury of walking down the hall to catch-up on the latest techniques

or to gather other relevent information. Instead they see their colleagues perhaps once a month at various district or department meetings. Second, the often transitory nature of most BI students requires teachers to frequently send and receive information and data concerning particular students. With this frequent exchange of information characterizing the field of behavior impairment it is to be expected that some information will not reach the right location. However, it does not excuse the need to establish or "tighten" procedures relative to information exchange in order to minimize the inadequacies that exist in the current situation.

Lack of Professional Direction. Professionals in the field of behavior impairment in Nebraska need a sense of direction, a sense of professional belonging. Too often teachers are overwhelmed with a feeling of frustration and professional isolation because of a lack of administrative and/or community support for their efforts. While such a lack of support compounds the difficulties in performing one's job well, it does not render it impossible. Nevertheless, it can and does add to job dissatisfaction. In fact, while research on teacher burnout and attrition has been sparse until recently, some of the current literature strongly suggests that primary among the reasons for teacher attrition, or at least job dissatisfaction, is the lack of consistent support by administrators and support staff.

In order to counter these feelings of isolation and lack of support, it is important that BI teachers recognize their role as professionals both within the field of behavior impairment, and also as part of the larger profession of education. Certainly within Nebraska, several strong "pockets" of experience and expertise exist relative to behavior impairment. These "pockets", while capable of performing admirably within their immediate vicinity and in terms of meeting their own goals, have not been incorporated as part of a unified profession in behavior impairment. This has weakened

their overall statewide impact and deprived professionals in less strongly developed areas of significant professional leadership and identity.

Proposed Solutions and Resources

While the general problem of the development of professionalism within teachers of the behaviorally impaired in Nebraska reveals several component parts, i.e., lack of administrative support, need for systematic information exchange, and lack of professional direction, it is evident from the previous discussion that these elements are highly interrelated. Thus, a solution which on the surface appears most closely targeted at resolving the need for systematic information sharing may also have an impact upon teachers' perceptions of administrative support or their feelings of professional isolation. Because of this interrelatedness, the solutions proposed and the resources suggested are not categorized according to the individual concerns expressed regarding professionalism, but are instead presented as a group. Moreover, no attempt has been made to prioritize the suggestions offered. This task is left to the decision-makers within the audience. Obviously, some of the proposed solutions may already be in effect in some districts and/or facilities in Nebraska. Others, however, represent voids across the entire state. In any instance, it is hoped that readers will use the suggestions as a starting point of their own, developing a unique list of solutions appropriate to their particular situation.

1. In an attempt to increase understanding and clarity and to decrease possible distortion, principals, BI program supervisors, and teachers are urged to negotiate a written description of the role of the BI program within each building. This written document should include a discussion of program goals and their relationship to other services in the building, a description of the BI teacher's role and responsibilities and a delineation of the

principal's and supervisor's role in relation to the BI program. The process of developing such a description can serve as a mechanism for informing building administrators about the workings of BI programs. Hopefully the existence of a negotiated document will add to the teacher's sense of belonging to the building and feelings of administrative support.

2. As a corollary of #1, it is also suggested that program planning include provisions for frequent opportunities for clear verbal communication between the building administrator and BI teacher. Possible topics for such discussions include dealing with individual student behavior, long range program goals, effecting mainstreaming, etc.

3. Procedures must be instituted to insure the systematic exchange of student information between and within agencies/districts. Between-agency problems will be discussed at greater length in Chapter V. Suffice to say here that many of the problems relating to exchange of student information may have to be resolved at the state level between decision-makers from the various agencies involved, i.e., education, mental health, corrections. Until such dialog occurs, there are some other activities which, if implemented, can possibly increase the successful exchange of information in order to alleviate those problems which relate to the internal workings of one's own agency or district. Included among these are:

    a. Development of a description of the procedures related to the exchange of information for dissemination to all educational personnel within the system so that all appropriate personnel have an understanding of what is to be exchanged under what circumstances and following what procedures.

b. Encouragement of personnel to assertively inform appropriate others of the need for consistent exchange of information.

c. Prompt attention to dissemination of appropriate information to others by each person within the chain of information exchange.

d. Utilization of information once received.

4. Attention should be given to the role of professional organizations as a form of support to teachers in BI and as a mechanism for professional growth and development. Translated into specific action this can include:

a. Dissemination via local and state professional organizations (especially those serving education administrators) of information concerning models of administration/BI program relationships. These groups serving administrators can be essential in establishing and monitoring the attitudes of administrators toward programs for the behaviorally impaired.

b. Establishment of a state organization serving professionals involved in the treatment of behaviorally impaired children and youth, e.g., a Nebraska Council for Children with Behavior Disorders.

c. Development, under the auspices of an appropriate professional organization, of a set of professional ethics and behavior for teachers of the behaviorally impaired.

5. More inservice is needed specific to the area of behavior impairment. Realistically, inservice is one effective way of conveying information to a variety of people with limited cost and effort. However, much attention must be given to the content and format of such inservice if it is to avoid the pitfalls and criticisms characterizing current inservice. Realistically, one-time, one-hour, after-school, attendance-required inservices do not effectively address the complexity and range of information inherent in topics crucial to the education of behaviorally impaired students. If anything, such an

approach to inservice can promote frustration and animosity by all professions toward this already difficult and unpleasant group of students. With these cautions in mind, the following activities should be considered so that inservice can be a viable mechanism for information exchange.

a. Evaluation of current inservice activities (relevance of content, desirability, and effectiveness of format), making appropriate modifications, if necessary, in future inservice to avoid weaknesses of the current offerings.

b. Designing future inservice with an eye to the clarity of the goals of that inservice and intended outcomes. This information must be mutually agreed upon by inservice providers and recipients in order to minimize discontent with the results of inservice by all parties involved.

c. Development of inservice activities which address geographic, time, and budget limitations.

d. Incorporation of a plan for evaluation as part of all inservice activities so that information can be collected which will allow for improving the quality of such inservice in the future.

e. Implementation of inservice for administrators, especially principals, relative to special education (and BI specifically) is imperative. There is widespread recognition that no program in BI will succeed without support of these persons. All inservice providers should be made aware of this phenomenon. Training activities specifically designed for administrators (as opposed to modified teacher training) would allow the administrator the opportunity to develop a sense of direction in regard to special education programs operating within his/her building. School districts and educational service units have, in the past, occasionally provided administrators with this opportunity. Hopefully such practices will expand in the future.

6. In addition to increased inservice, attention should also be given to the continuation or establishment of other activities that support the professional development of BI teachers such as:

a. Resource materials specific to the area of behavior impairment which describe programs and teacher expertise available within Nebraska.

b. Local and regional publications and newsletters relating to the education of BI students.

c. Opportunities for BI teachers to meet collectively in order to establish personal and professional relationships, discuss current issues relating to BI, and formulate the professional direction of the field of BI within Nebraska. Such a professional support network is vital to the maintenance of a professional identity and the decrease of the sense of professional isolation.

7. School districts and agencies must continue and redouble their efforts to support and encourage professional development on the part of BI teachers. Access to, and participation in, a variety of professional activities as discussed in # 5 and # 6 not only are viewed as forms of extrinsic reward but may also have impact on teachers' perceptions of the intrinsic rewards associated with their job. Given the high attrition rate associated with the field of behavior impairment, it behooves schools and agencies to develop all avenues possible to retain quality BI teachers. Professional development is one such major avenue.

8. Teacher trainers in IHEs must also be sensitive to the area of professionalism and professional development as they train students at the preservice level. Many of the variables discussed in this chapter should be incorporated into personnel preparation programs both in special education and educational administration. Assisting future professionals to understand the value of continuing professional development and the benefits derived from professional affiliations should be an integral part of any training program professing to train educational professionals.

CHAPTER III

CONTINUUM OF SERVICES WITHIN EDUCATION

Description of the Problem

The passage of Public Law 94-142 and its requirements of (a) free appropriate education and (b) least restrictive environment have frequently been translated, for implementation purposes, into an arrangement labeled a continuum of services. What is implied in that term is an array of programming alternatives ranging from "most normal" (terminology used in Section 504) or "least restrictive" (Public Law 94-142) settings to those environments which least resemble the regular public school classroom environment. An analysis of the availability of a continuum of services within education frequently reveals that such a continuum is available within any state. Nebraska fits this pattern. However, the probability is much smaller that a full continuum of services exists within individual districts within a state. Again, Nebraska is no exception.

In examining the parameters which define the problem of an inadequate continuum of services within education in Nebraska, five major voids can be identified. These include (a) the need for alternatives within general education to handle behavior problems at the school building level, (b) the need for a range of special education services to address the varying problems presented by students identified as behaviorally impaired, (c) the need to expand curriculum options available for BI students at the secondary level, (d) the need to assess current educational interventions employed with behaviorally impaired students being served by school districts in Nebraska, and (e) a need for regional planning for service delivery especially in rural areas. Following is a brief discussion of each of these specific needs as part of the overall problem of providing a full continuum of services within education.

Lack of Regular Education Alternatives. Many students in public school settings exhibit a variety of behavioral difficulties for which classroom teachers would like asistance. Lack of in-building alternatives other than special education to assist classroom teachers in dealing with the student's behavioral difficulties contributes to potential problems in at least four areas:

1. Overreferral. When other viable in-building alternatives (e.g., counseling, school team problem-solving, etc.) are not available classroom teachers will often refer students with behavioral difficulties for diagnosis. There are several major disadvantages to this practice: (a) the diagnostic process for BI may be lengthy, in the meantime, the classroom teacher receives little help; (b) the referred student may not qualify for special education, thereby returning the student to the classroom without alternative interventions being tried; and (c) overreferral results in unnecessary cost to the district if the referrals are not appropriate for special education.

2. Inappropriate verification. When in-building alternatives or support services do not exist for handling behavioral problems, teachers, administrators, and parents may apply pressure to diagnostic personnel in order to verify that students with transient or mild behavioral problems qualify for special education services because no other viable options exist.

3. Lack of collection of diagnostic data to contribute to the verification decision. One of the key components in the identification and diagnosis of behaviorally impaired students is documentation as to what alternative interventions have been tried in an effort to modify or change the existing behavioral difficulty. Classroom teachers as referring agents are extremely important in the diagnostic process and must play an active role. That is, classroom teachers should be responsible for documentation of their observations and alternative intervention strategies. If in-building alternatives for handling behavior problems do not exist and interventions prior to referral are not encouraged, then valuable and necessary diagnostic information will be lacking.

4. Assumption of total responsibility for the student's programming by special education services. When in-building, team-generated alternatives do not exist for handling behavioral problems it is very difficult to integrate the BI student into the regular classroom. If regular classroom teachers do not have support options, in addition to special education, they will likely want special education to assume the student's total program and resist mainstreaming.

Inadequate Range of Special Education Services. Many school districts across that state do not offer a continuum of services within special education itself to meet the varying needs of behaviorally impaired students in

their districts. Such a continuum includes but is not limited to alternatives such as (a) consultation, (b) itinerant services, (c) resource rooms, (d) part-time special classes, and (e) full-time, self contained special classes. The lack of a full range of service is particularly evident in the numerous small rural districts. Reasons for such a lack, especially in rural areas, include: (a) the number of identified BI students in a small district may not justify the hiring one teacher with specialized training in BI; (b) the great distances between some school districts may not make it economically feasible for an itinerant specialist to cover a large geographical area; (c) small rural districts may be unable to attract personnel trained in BI; and (d) intermediate agencies such as educational service units (ESUs) have not been particularly effective in regionalizing a continuum of available BI services to rural districts.

Insufficient Curriculum Options at the Secondary Level. Services for behaviorally impaired adolescents on any widespread scale is a relatively new addition to the continuum of services. Even so, there is general consensus that behaviorally impaired adolescents are among the least appropriately served students with special needs. This may be the result of a variety of reasons including difficulty of providing service, inadequately trained teachers, or uncertainty of eligibility. Certainly one commonly encountered reason for the inappropriateness of service to BI adolescents is the lack of curriculum options available. All too frequently service to secondary level behaviorally impaired students consists of the modification of the college-bound curriculum. While this may be an appropriate choice for some behaviorally impaired students, to define the educational options so narrowly is inappriopriate. For this age student, careful assessment must be made of the student's life chances

and programming appropriate to long term goals must be incorporated into the curriculum. It is incumbent upon school personnel to conceptualize realistic goals for this group of students. All too frequently, the goal is simply one of keeping the student in school. Why? Why are these students in school? For what are the schools preparing these students? Better information about the life-situation characteristics of graduates, of currently enrolled students, and of drop-outs from services will help in determining the kinds of curricula needed to assist these students. It is safe to predict that among the options that will need to be considered are more programming in career/vocational areas and alternative approaches to meeting diploma requirements, e.g., the GED. Currently, the number of BI adolescents participating in these options is miniscule. Whether because these options have not been developed as of yet or because BI students are being denied access to such programs, the end result is the same and it must be remedied.

Lack of Data Base on Current Intervention Practices. At the current time, little data exist about the the types of educational interventions BI students are receiving. It is important that interventions which have proven to be successful be identified and disseminated to other practitioners throughout the state. This would be especially important in rural areas where it is more difficult to provide services by personnel specifically trained and endorsed in BI and where the majority of services may be provided by generalist resource teachers. The term intervention is used here in its broadest sense. Not only is information lacking on best practices relative to behavioral interventions, but parallel data are not available on successful academic/instructional programming.

Lack of Regional Planning for Service Delivery. Most of the outstate regional planning for a full continuum of services for BI children and youth has occured in areas which (a) have an identified population, and (b) have an agency which has promoted cooperative planning. In areas where a full continuum of school service options are limited, especially in rural districts, there is a need for regional planning to occur. It is possible that many alternative service options could be developed among several districts cooperating in a regional plan. For example, the regional plan may call for itinerant consultants to work with regular classroom teachers who have students with mild behavior disorders. Within the region there may be resource room services for the moderately behaviorally impaired as well as a site within the region for serving the severely impaired in a self-contained setting. In other words, one cannot ignore the problems inherent to rural areas which interfere with the development of a full continuum of services to the BI population. This does not, however, relieve the responsibility of providing such services. It does mean that creative approaches to programming must be explored. Regional planning is one such approach.

Proposed Solutions and Resources

When viewing the problem of an inadequate or insufficient continuum of services, one could easily fall into the trap of recommending that schools find their service gaps and simply fill them. Of course, the problem is not so simply resolved. It may be possible to fill each gap with a number of alternatives. It is important that this complexity be remembered. At any level of service, multiple alternatives may be available. Thus, for example, when we say schools need to expand vocational programming this could include options such as work-study, on-the-job training, job simulations, off campus

work situations, and cooperative planning with vocational-technical schools. There is not just one choice to fill a void and a school may want to have more than one option, provided it has the resources to do so. In any instance, it is important that as an overriding philosophy, schools remember that a variety of alternatives are available at any particular service level and that it behooves them to examine this range of options before making programming. decisions. The following proposals address some of those options.

In addition, it would be naive to assume that there are not other factors associated with the problem of an insufficient continuum of service, e.g., fiscal resources, training, technical assistance, etc. For that reason, the proposed solutions include some which go beyond simply "filling the gaps."

1. School districts must explore alternative interventions or support services that can be developed at the building level. As starters, they might consider the following:

    a. change in student's class schedule
    b. change in student's teacher
    c. counseling provided by the school counselor
    d. curriculum modification
    e. behavior management
    f. crisis intervention tutor
    g. in-house suspension
    h. alternative learning class - student is sent to one class or study hall location where student is monitored all day long.

    Certainly this is not a definitive list, but it can be used as a beginning for those schools who find themselves lacking at the end of the continuum related to regular class programming.

2. Another approach related to the resolution of voids in building level services focuses upon the development of a "teacher assistance team." This mechanism is designed to assist classroom teachers in handling mild to moderate behavioral problems in the classroom as well as those identified BI students who are mainstreamed. The teacher

assistance team concept involves a pre-referral team meeting process which is aimed at generating alternative intervention strategies for dealing with behavioral problems. It is anticipated that generation of alternatives by building level personnel will foster a consistent and improved data base for the diagnosis of behavioral impairment. By utilizing in-building alternatives, classroom teachers receive assistance with students with behavioral difficulties and at the same time collect behavioral data relative to the effect of the building interventions for decision-making. Use of in-building generated alternatives by the building "team" places emphasis on expertise at the school level to solve behavior problems and assists teachers so that only the most severe and, hence, those most likely to be verified, are ultimately referred. The process involved with the use of a building level team may provide a way for teachers to receive assistance in intervening with students with mild to moderate behavioral difficulties without going through a time consuming and costly diagnostic process.

3. As a corollary of # 1 and # 2, special education administrators should consider modifying the roles of diagnostic personnel, e.g., psychologists, diagnosticians, etc., to include consultation with the regular classroom teacher prior to referral. This consultation would take the form of the elements described in the teacher assistance team process. For example, the consultant could assist teachers in (a) clearly defining the student's problem(s) so that appropriate assistance can be devised or suggested; (b) using methods for collecting documentation regarding the problem, e.g., observations, rating scales, work samples, anecdotal records, informal tests, etc.; (c) identifying other school situations and/or personnel involved in the problem; and (d) recording

interventions previously utilized and their relative success.

4. While some districts within Nebraska, particularly urban ones, may have established a full continuum of special education services, (as opposed to preventive services), many rural districts have not. For those districts, it is critical that they assess their current services in light of the following continuum:

Integrated settings which include:
- a) regular class with consultative help
- b) resource room - where the student spends one or two hours per day in special education and the remainder in regular education

Segregated settings which include:
- a) part-time or full-time special class (usually seen as self-contained for one-half to all of day)
- b) special school

The above list must be viewed as a minimal definition of continuum since most conceptualizations of a continuum of services include as many as seven to nine options. Nevertheless, districts which have even an abbreviated continuum are going a long way on the road to providing appropriate services to meet the varying needs of their BI students.

5. School districts should investigate the development of curricular alternatives such as work study and career education. As indicated previously, a variety of options exists under the general label of vocational education and school need to explore which of these alternatives best fits their needs. One means of integrating such options into the overall curriculum at the secondary level is via a series of program strands as follows:

(a) Strand One--Students who can successfully complete the secondary curriculum with social and emotional support programming.

(b) Strand Two--Students for whom a work-study alternative is a realistic program for post high school adjustment to the community. This generally involves students for whom the secondary program does not provide enough alternatives, who experience excessive conflict in the secondary

school and for whom a functional level of independence will be thrust upon the student after leaving high school (will move out of his/her parents' home and be self supporting).

(c) Strand Three—Students who are so far behind in credit/courses that completion of a traditional secondary program appears impossible. This program could be built around completion of the GED and basic career/vocational education.

6. As a corollary of # 5, schools should explore such implementation strategies as team teaching of courses by special education personnel and those in vocational education and encouraging the training of secondary resource teachers in the area of vocational training.

7. To solve the problem of an inadequate continuum of service in low density population areas, regional planning must be utilized. There are numerous ways in which such planning may be encouraged and/or facilitated. The following represent several alternatives to stimulating regional planning for the delivery of service to BI students:

(a) Develop regional planning on a voluntary basis through the assistance of an intermediate education agency such as an educational service unit and/or by school districts forming their own regional plans.

(b) Direct regional planning through ESUs, provided these units fall under the jurisdiction of the Nebraska Department of Education. (Note: this would necessitate a change in current legislation.)

(c) Tie regional planning to state reimbursements for BI programs.

(d) Tie regional planning to out-of-state placements as part of the Nebraska Department of Education approval for placement process.

8. A second alternative to assist rural districts in the development of a full range of service options involves the use of technical assistance teams at either the state or ESU level. Technical assistance teams could go to rural areas and assist them in determining

their services option needs and available resources in the area of behavioral impairment. At this point, a regional linkage might be formed or the technical assistance teams could train school personnel in establishing service option alternatives.

9. School districts should conduct an assessment of the nature and effectiveness of practices within their BI programs. Included in this assessment should also be some evaluation of their own resources (human and material) which support these programs and which might be drawn upon for professional development within their own district or utilized by other districts which are seeking to establish BI programs. In a related vein, districts should be encouraged to take advantage of state and federal funds which are targeted for the development, identification, evaluation, and dissemination of best practices in the field of special education.

10. State level decision-makers should be encouraged to support projects (statewide or regional) which can provide technical assistance to districts interested in filling in the voids in their service continuum or to assist in conducting needs assessments of successful practices and disseminate the results. The Support System Project for the Behaviorally Impaired is an example of one such project which has been instrumental in providing assistance to BI teachers and school districts in a variety of ways. Given the relative newness of services to BI students in the public schools, the varying stages of development of BI programs across the state and the numerous rural and/or small school districts geographically spread across Nebraska, a recognizable technical assistance project can be a benefical mechanism for stimulating quality programming within BI

11. Decision-makers at both the state and local levels should consider offering inservice to address some of the problems discussed herein. For example, school administrators could benefit from inservice designed toward acquainting them with various types of service delivery models appropriate for use with BI students. Even more specifically, both administrators and BI teachers should have inservice provided relative to vocational/career education programming options for BI adolescents. Finally, educational professionals in general might find useful inservice on teacher assistance teams and/or the problem-solving process as an alternative to the tradition team-meeting approach.

CHAPTER IV

CONTINUUM OF SERVICES ACROSS COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Description of the Problem

In the previous chapter the problem of an inadequate continuum of services was discussed within the context of educational services. However, a continuum of services can also be interpreted in a broader sense, going beyond the provision of educational services. In this chapter, the emphasis is upon this broader context and, hence, addresses the insufficiency of services to behaviorally impaired children and youth and their families outside of school.

It is apparent that the family and the out-of-school environment have a major impact on a behaviorally impaired student, his/her progress, and the school program. Inadequate support services for the family and out-of-school environment adversely affects student progress and lowers the efficiency and effectiveness of the school program. In Nebraska, the problem of an insufficient support system for families of behaviorally impaired children is twofold in nature. First, some needed support services are not available, and, second, services that are available are not provided on a coordinated basis. The support services which are needed fall into three categories: (a) assistance in dealing with personal and interpersonal issues within and among the members of the family, (b) development of the skills necessary to assist a family to remain intact, and (c) provision of a continuum of care options. Each of these three are described more fully below.

Lack of Assistance for Personal and Interpersonal Problems. The behaviorally impaired student and each member of his/her family or environment often times have emotional needs/problems relative to themselves or their relationships with other members of the environment which require outside support. Generally this support is in the form of counseling to

help the family deal with these personal/interpersonal issues. However, the current service delivery system can be characterized as (a) lacking a continuum of counseling services, particularly across agencies, and (b) lacking coordination of counseling services provided by various agencies (schools, mental health) or of counseling provided for different purposes (student centered vs. family centered).

Need for Services to Assist Families to Remain Intact. The skills needed to help families of behaviorally impaired children or youth to cope and remain intact are wide ranging and may include parenting, communication, behavior management, family budgeting, and occupational assistance. There are many factors both within the family and between the family and the rest of the environment which impact on the family. These factors affect the family's ability to remain intact and its ability to be a support to the BI child's progress. Therefore, there are many possible skills which may be needed to assist the family in dealing with these pressures. Currently, however, provision of training or other means of assistance to develop or maintain these basic learning skills are not readily available to families of behaviorally impaired children and youth.

Need for a Continuum of Care Options. This need pertains to situations in which the BI child and family need to be separated for a period of time. This period of separation may range from a few hours to long-term placement in a residential facility depending on the child and the ability of the environment to cope with and assist the child. Services which address this area may include respite care (in-house and out-of-home), crisis intervention, foster care, group homes, and residential facilities. Currently such a range of services is lacking in Nebraska. These conditions too often result in either no assistance to families of the handicapped or out-of-state residential placement.

It is apparent from the description of specific support service needs that the continuum of services across agencies in Nebraska has some voids or gaps. In that respect it parallels the continuum of services within education. However, the problems in the case of cross-agencies services are compounded because what may be a positive solution to a specific case for one agency, e.g., placement in a good foster home, may product a negative situation for another agency; e.g., the foster home is located in a community lacking adequate mental health or educational facilities. Thus, while there may be positive partial solutions, the overall result may be negative in terms of impact on the behaviorally impaired child.

Possible Solutions and Resources

The task of resolving problems that involve multiple agencies is no easy one. When the clientele are behaviorally impaired children and youth and their families, the task is even more challenging. In seeking to resolve the problem of inadequate services across agencies, there are at least two major underlying assumptions that are implicit in the problem and/or solution and upon which there must be consensus. First, agencies and the individuals within the agencies must understand that children, especially those with impaired behavior, are complex entities with varied and involved problems and characteristics, and that these children exist in a complex, dynamic environment involving many other individuals and agencies. Second, each of these parts is connected in such a way that manipulation/intervention with one part will affect, sometimes counter-productively, other parts. In this same vein, it bears noting that the degree to which agencies have coordinated their service in the past is disappointingly poor. This does not constitute an underlying assumption, but a commentary on reality. For a variety of reasons including differing or even conflicting statutory mandates, protection of turf, and competition for

declining fiscal resources, the lack of joint or interagency collaboration on behalf of behaviorally impaired children and youth is appalling. It seems apparent, therefore, that the major solution to the current situation revolves around the need to develop interagency plans of action. It is from that perspective that the following suggestions are offered.

1. Agencies and individuals must develop plans and actions which are based on their system's perspective of the child and his/her environment. A plan/implement/evaluate/modify format should be employed, with each agency involved at each stage in the process. Communication and establishment of a common understanding of the problems/issues involved is the glue which will hold the plan/implement/evaluate/modify process together. Although the agencies and individuals must see a need for the coordination in order for a coordinated system to work, it may be that the agencies are too involved in their own internal problems to deal with the larger issue. That leads directly to the second suggestion.

2. It is necessary to <u>establish funding mechanisms requiring interagency cooperation</u>, i.e., funds provided only based on regional joint agency projects. The ground rules for such joint agency projects would basically require agencies to jointly analyze the larger problems that now exist relative to providing services to BI children; develop a plan to provide coordinated services with specific roles, responsibilities and outcomes; implement the plan; evaluate the results and modify the plan/implementation based on the evaluation. Included in this process would be:

    a. Each agency at the local/regional level must specify individuals who will be involved in the coordination effort.

b. Once identified the coordination team analyzes the needs, problems, and factors impinging on student progress as related to the student and his/her interaction with family/ environment.

c. The coordination team developes a plan designed to meet the needs outlined in "b". This plan would specify agency roles and responsibilities, expected outcomes, and evaluation/ modification procedures. A possible component of this local/ regional plan could be a team composed of members of the different agencies involved which would receive referrals and develop/implement plans of action to meet identified needs. For instance this team might include decision-making level individuals from education, mental health, county attorney, police, probations, and social service.

d. The plan would be implemented with oversight from the coordination team and/or the agency referral team specified above. Certainly as the plan is implemented problems which inhibit coordination will be identified and should be referred to the coordination team for resolution.

e. Evaluation of the plan and the process should be on-going and designed to provide feedback for improvement rather than final judgement as to success or failure.

f. The plans must address the overriding issue identified earlier: development of a system's perspective and common understanding of student/family/environment needs. Regularly scheduled meetings to communicate regarding role, responsibility, and philosophy would be desirable.

CHAPTER V

INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATION

Description of the Problem

The previous chapter focused upon interagency problems related to gaps in the continuum of services offered by various agencies. This chapter continues the interagency focus but looks more specifically at communication between and among the agencies providing service to behaviorally impaired children and youth. Three specific aspects of interagency communication are offered for consideration: lack of information sharing; turfdom; and duplication of services. While there may be other components within the general category of interagency communication which are also troublesome, these three were selected as being most in need of attention and resolution.

Lack of Information Sharing. Vast amounts of information concerning BI students in general and as individuals are generated by the various helping agencies, corrections facilities and the schools (public and private). The information collected includes but is not limited to behavioral observations, medical records, IEPs, psychological testing results, and school transcripts.

Various difficulties arise when this information is to be shared across agencies. Some information may be confidential and/or it may be restricted in its release to only certain agencies. Release of information statutes serve to slow down, if not actually prevent, the sharing of information. Individual agency procedures, e.g., non-payment of fines, can also impede information release.

Another obstacle in the information sharing process is the lack of standardization of information collected by the various agencies. Despite the amount of information that is generated regarding behaviorally impaired

children and youth by any particular agency, the information sharing process breaks down because the same information is not collected in the same form or by the same name across agencies. One must be well acquainted with a particular agency's data collection system to be able to structure a request for information which insures that the data desired are retrievable and receivable.

In a somewhat related vein is the concern regarding the differences in labels used by the various agencies serving children and youth with disordered behavior. Depending on the agency in question, the population which has been referred to throughout this document as behaviorally impaired may instead be called: emotionally disturbed, schizoprenic, psychotic, autistic, socially maladjusted, neglected, delinquent, or developmentally disabled. There are reasons for such a proliferation of labels, some of which are related to an agency's statutory mandates or the professional/philosophical orientation of the service providers. Nevertheless, these labels can be an impediment to sharing of information across agencies.

While the discussion to this point has emphasized the sharing of the already existing plethora of information, it is important to note that there are some sizeable gaps in the data bases within the various agencies. Some potentially valuable data are simply not being collected as a result of: (a) ignorance of the necessity, (b) personnel shortages, or (c) inadequate funding for data collection. Data of a longitudinal nature, i.e., tracking or following the placement sequence of BI students, on truancy and drop-out patterns, and on programmatic effectiveness and impact are frequently not available within agencies providing services to behaviorally impaired children and youth. It does not seem unreasonable to expect such basic information.

Turfdom. A major obstacle to interagency communication and delivery of service is "turfdom", a simple but accurate label applied to the process of protecting one's turf. When more than one discipline is involved in the delivery of services to a particular child, there are often differing opinions about the relative importance of various aspects of this child's program. Ultimate content can become an issue. At the state level, the problem is reflected in difficulties associated with implementing the single line of responsibility concept and the allocation of resources. At both state and local levels, professionals are far from working out formal or informal agreements to provide smooth communication and collaboration on a full range of services to behaviorally impaired children and youth.

Duplication of Services. It is most unfortunate at a time when large numbers of children are not being provided appropriate services because of gaps in the continuum of services that the field also faces rather significant duplication of services across agencies. This is not meant to imply that only one agency should be given the responsibility of providing a specific service to the exclusion of other agencies doing so. However, given the current fiscal situation encountered in most states, there simply are not extra dollars floating around to allow such widespread duplication of services, much of which has developed as a result of lack of communication or knowledge of the services provided by other groups.

There are, of course, other reasons which have contributed to the current duplication of services. Each state agency is functioning under its own particular statutory mandate which defines the task of the agency. This can obviously lead to more than one agency being directed to provide the same or similar services.

Another factor contributing to the duplication of services is the availability of state or federal monies to stimulate services. When fiscal resources become available particularly on a competitive basis, it is not uncommon for numerous groups to seek their "share of the pot." This may result in various agencies providing duplicative services, regardless of what their legal mandate originally encompassed.

Finally, it is also apparent that agencies knowingly duplicate one another's services because of a basic mistrust of the expertise of others to do the job. Agencies are imbued with their fair share of confidence in terms of provision of service so the "nobody can do it better" (or at least not quite as well) syndrome is evident. This gets complicated or compounded by the existence of differences in the philosophical orientation existing within the various agencies. The provision of any specific service may be viewed as not being duplicative because it is being delivered by a different professional or from a different theoretical framework than in the case in another agency. Regardless of the reason, the existence of duplicated services at a time when large numbers of behaviorally impaired children and youth remain unserved or inappropriately served is a waste that we must remedy.

Proposed Solutions and Resources

Interagency communication and collaboration is one of these areas that is currently receiving much attention. It is, in fact, an "in" topic, a phenomenon largely attributed to the requirements of Public Law 94-142. Ironically, if one looks at the history of the topic, it is readily evident that concern for improved interagency relations is not at all new. Despite this, there appears to have been little discernible progress made in increasing or improving interagency communication and cooperation. It is, in fact, a frustrating issue which has generated much attention but little successful action.

Part of the frustration may be related to the difficulty of directly attacking some of the factors impeding interagency communication. Protection of turf and differing philosophical orientations are variables which seem to elude resolution and perhaps rightly so. A more realistic approach might be one of trying to enhance understanding of one another's philosophy or reasons for being protective than to change such behaviors. In that respect, it may also be more realistic to discuss the goal of initiating communication among agencies as opposed to increasing communication. The assumption that meaningful communication is already occuring, implicit in the latter situation, may not be valid.

What follows is a set of proposals in those areas which appear resolvable. However, is it apparent that the problem of interagency communication has significant attitudinal, fiscal, and legal overtones which may impede the implementation of even these basic suggestions.

Finally, it should be noted that some of these proposals overlap with or reiterate ones suggested in Chapter II--Development of Professionalism and Chapter IV--Continuum of Services Across Community Agencies. Rather than being viewed as redundent, it is hoped readers understand that this serves to reinforce the importance of resolving the issues involved.

1. Procedures must be instituted to address the problems of information sharing across agencies. As part of that process, the following specific actions should be initiated:

    a. Develop a clear cut definition (or redefinition) of the type of information that may be released, to whom it may be released, and under what circumstances.

    b. Devise a standardized set of release forms and, if possible, procedures.

    c. Disseminate the results of "a" and "b" to all relevant personnel so that they have a sound understanding of the parameters and process of information sharing across agencies.

d. Explore the possibility of producing a format for automatic release of information as a student moves from agency to agency. Currently such an action would encounter problems with privacy and release of information laws. However, a starting place might well be an analysis of precisely what legislative changes would need to be made from each agency's perspective in order to implement an automatic release procedure. Such an analysis could then provide the basis for the appropriate agency administration to decide the feasibility of designing and processing the necessity legislative changes. All too often, efforts at interagency collaboration have been cavalierly dismissed as impossible because of differing legislative foundations governing the various agencies. Grantedly, legislative changes take time and effort to effect, however, if not attempted they will never occur. It may well be that an area as specific as sharing of information presents a manageable starting point for dialog and action aimed at reducing barriers between agencies and enhancing interagency communication.

2. Attention must be given to the uniform collection of appropriate data across public agencies including education, mental health, and corrections. There are two subcomponents of this suggestion: uniformity of data collection and data collection in areas where such is missing. While agencies, especially public schools, are perhaps "chafing" under the plethora of data required as part of Public Law 94-142 the obvious lack of availability of such data across all agencies is discouraging. As indicated in the description of the problem, certain types of data are not being required by any agency and other data are collected by one agency but not others. Given the current situation which demands children be tracked across agencies and be cooperatively handled, uniformity and coordination of data collection are vital. Agencies should not be blind to the existence of other agencies and to the fact the information each collects is of value to others. Compatibility of data across agencies will enhance the utility of all data collected. What is not necessary is a wealth of data that cannot be translated meaningfully by other

agencies serving the same population concurrently or at some other point in time.

3. In an attempt to address the duplication of services across agencies, agencies are admonished to investigate mechanisms for coordinating services. As a first step, it will be important that personnel from the various agencies become acquainted with the services provided by other agencies. Interagency inservice appears one logical vehicle for informing personnel regarding the nature of services provided by various agencies including clientele served, types of services, referral process, etc. A second action would be the establishment of local or regional joint agency projects as described in the Proposed Solutions in Chapter IV. This could involve the creation of a cross-agency committee which would receive referrals and develop and implement service plans to meet the needs as identified on a case by case basis. Such a committee might include representation from education, mental health, police, probation, social services, and the county attorney's office. Such interagency committees have been implemented elsewhere across the country usually on a pilot basis. However, it would not be difficult to identify several examples of cross-agency collaboration which the appropriate decision-makers could study as a basis for formulating their own efforts. It is probably realistic to assume that some agency/individual will need to take the lead to insure the initiation of the process. However, once the committee has been established, the lead agency or case manager role can be shifted among the members based on the predominent needs of the case under consideration or some other relevant criterion.

CHAPTER VI

ATTITUDES/EXPECTATIONS

Description of the Problem

Some attention has been given, either directly or indirectly, to the issue of attitudes in several of the previous chapters. However, the concern over attitudes and expectations is of such magnitude that it warrants separate treatment. That probably comes as no surprise to most readers as the topic of attitudes has been of growing interest particularly with the increase in mainstreaming. In analyzing the parameters of the problem of attitudes/expectations three major variables surface: (a) lack of understanding with regard to behaviorally impaired children and youth and programs to serve that population; (b) conflicting orientations by professionals whose roles impinge on programs for behaviorally impaired children and youth; and (c) expectations by teachers of behaviorally impaired that they must guarantee a "cure" for their charges.

Lack of Understanding. To say that professionals within the field of behavior impairment experience a feeling of not having their work and their children understood usually gives rise to comments on paranoia or a "Rodney Dangerfield" complex. However, given the actions (or lack there of) taken relative to behaviorally impaired programs and students there are few interpretations that appear to be as reasonable an explanation. To believe that people (teachers, administrators, members of the community) do not fully understand the goals of programs for the behaviorally impaired or the needs of these children does seem more positive and resolvable than the alternative which suggests that the history of actions to this population reflects that people do not like or want to serve these children. While there are some people who believe that the latter interpretation is not without merit, it does not offer many avenues for action. On the other hand, it would be naive to

assume that there are not some people within the educational, social, or political community who, in fact, do not like behaviorally impaired children. It has already been pointed out that they are not the easiest, most likable group with whom to work.

Given the relative newness of services for behaviorally impaired children and youth within the public schools, it is not unexpected that outsiders to the field do not possess a solid knowledge base on the topic. If served in the past, these children and youth were usually viewed as belonging under the purview of mental health and/or corrections. Thus, when it became evident that the public schools were, in fact, the primary responsible agent, one can readily understand the puzzled looks and questions by school administrators. What are we supposed to do with these children? How do we provide for them? Don't they belong in the state hospital? Will we need to hire a psychiatrist? All of these are questions that have been repeatedly posed by school officials. Having had little experience in developing, implementing, and administering programs for the behaviorally impaired, educational professionals (sometimes including teachers of the behaviorally impaired, themselves) have felt and expressed hesitancy and even discomfort in terms of what constitutes appropriate expectations and programming for this population. While some of this lack of understanding has been reduced as programs for behaviorally impaired students have been implemented within school districts, it is still relatively common to encounter teachers, administrators, and community members whose baseline of understanding of the area of behavior impairment is fuzzy at best.

Conflicting Orientations. Somewhat related to this lack of understanding is the existence of conflicting orientations on the part of various professionals whose roles and responsibilities impinge on programs for behaviorally impaired children and youth or upon the students directly. In other words, it is not uncommon for teachers of the behaviorally impaired to find themselves at cross

purposes with other professionals (teachers and/or administrators) relative to the treatment of behaviorally impaired students. Given the respective roles and responsibilities of each set of professionals, such differences are predictable. Teachers of behaviorally impaired students have been trained to be student-oriented, to be advocates on behalf of their children, to be sensitive (and even insensitive) to an uncommonly wide range of behavior. Thus, teachers of behaviorally impaired students have very focused concerns related to their individual teaching situation. On the other hand, a building administrator, for example, views the happenings within his/her environment from a broader perspective of a general learning environment. His/her responsibility focuses upon keeping things running smoothly. Obviously there are times when the actions of behaviorally impaired students create turmoil and disturb the equilibrium of the building. At this time teachers of behaviorally impaired students and building principals may well find themselves at cross purposes. For example, at the elementary level, a BI student who totally loses control of himself/herself and is destructive to property, other students and/or self would probably be physically restrained by the BI teacher and moved to an isolated area. The teacher would then see his/her function to calm the student and then work with the student immediately to show the student there are other behavioral options. The administrative view frequently would be to immediately exclude the child from the school building. The idea that the BI teacher physically handled the student may also not be seen as a "teacher function" by the administration. In the end, no one may be pleased with the handling of the particular crisis.

Such conflicting orientations are not confined to administrator-teacher situations, but can also exist between regular classroom teachers and teachers of the behaviorally impaired. The following example typifies the problem of conflicting orientations.

One day, one of the students from our room (BI room) was outside during lunchtime. He got into an argument while waiting to enter the building. There was some pushing. The duty teacher grabbed him by the back of the neck. The student reacted immediately by swinging his arm backwards. Consequently, he hit the teacher. Though the action was unintentional, he was suspended for 5 days.

"Cure" Expectations. While the previous discussion has focused upon attitudes/expectations by persons outside the field of behavior impairment, it is also important to realize that some aspects of the problem of attitude/expectations emanate from within. One such expectation relates to the perception on the part of teachers of the behaviorally impaired that they must "cure" their students. Stated in another way, it is evident that BI teachers have not been sensitized to the limitations of their professional training. For some reason, when students are placed in classes for the behaviorally impaired it is assumed by all concerned (parents, teachers, and administrators) that students will emerge "cured." Failure to do so is unheard of. When recommended for return to the mainstream, no reoccurance of the student's "bad" behavior is expected. How realistic is this? Are our educational strategies so foolproof as to avoid failure? In a field that has been characterized as both art and science can a 100% success rate be guaranteed? When viewed in that perspective, the answer seems obvious. No! Yet how often do BI teachers sit down with parents or other educational professionals and indicate that total cure may not be possible. Perhaps the profession needs to devote more attention to prognosis rates and possibilities. Certainly other professions allow themselves the protection of informing their clients regarding the odds for treatment/intervention success. Is this not an option for teachers of behaviorally impaired? Current practice indicates it is not. Perhaps to do so is antithetical to a helping professional. On the other hand, to hold out unrealistic hopes and expectations for parents and teachers and place equally unrealistic demands upon the expertise available within the professional

discipline is most unfair. This is an area which the profession as a whole needs to address.

Proposed Solutions and Resources

The prospect of changing existing attitudes and expectations inevitably appears a monumental task. If these attitudes, in fact, reflect the possessor's value system, the task may exceed the realm of possibility. The approach here, however, has been to view the attitudinal change as achievable. Thus, the following suggestions have been offered as attempts to influence attitudes and expectations.

1. The most important action which should be taken is one which serves to increase understanding of programs for behaviorally impaired students. As simplistic as it may sound, it is essential that before BI programs are initiated in any school district/building all necessary and appropriate groundwork be laid. All too often students are identified as behaviorally impaired and when sufficient numbers of such accumulate, a class is started. Such an approach is definitely not built upon mutual understanding. Instead, a first step in matching the expectations of educators having responsibility for BI programs is to discuss their particular expectations of such programs. All levels of personnel within the districts (from the school board, to district administrators/supervisors, to building administrators, to regular educators, and BI teachers) should explore what their expectations are as part of the process involved in defining district policy on programs for behaviorally impaired children and youth. This has particular relevence in relation to discipline policies and practices.

The initial leadership role should be carried by central administrative/supervisory staff. They should assist a building in preparing to implement a BI program. The building administrator(s), guidance counselors, BI teacher, and appropriate central administrator should reach some level of agreement on what the BI program is to accomplish. Once consensus on this has been reached, it becomes possible to discuss how to utilize the BI teacher as well as the other resources in the building. Such preparation should help narrow the differences in expectation and consequently enhance the services to behaviorally impaired students.

2. Professional organizations and teacher training programs in the area of behavior impairment should take the leadership in sensitizing teachers to the limitations of their profession. Discussions regarding the efficacy of instructional/managment techniques, the prognosis of certain types of disorders, the relative success encountered by teachers with varying types of children, obstacles which impede curing all children and the probability of overcoming such obstacles need to occur with great frequency. Such discussions should be conducted in an atmosphere of openness and honesty, avoiding the arousal of defensiveness or the condoning of an ineptitude.

3. Professional organizations in the area of behavior impairment should also consider mechanisms which they might sponsor which would enhance community understanding of behaviorally impaired children and youth and programs for this population. As indicated earlier, the attitudinal problem is not confined to the educational profession, but pervades communities at large. Given that few formal advocacy groups exist in the area of behavior impairment, the task of educating communities

must fall to other components within the system. Certainly professional organizations are logical and appropriate vehicles for organizing and implementing community awareness campaigns.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Consider the following case as described by a teacher of the behaviorally impaired:

> _____ was adopted at an early age. His parents soon divorced. The mother remarried, however, the new father died within a few years.
>
> _____ educational skills were above average, but his social skills were lacking - he was uncooperative, sullen, and had temper tantrums. He was diagnosed at E.D. at age 9 in Wichita, KS.
>
> They moved to my district when _____ was in 7th grade. He was placed in regular classes because no one bothered to review his permanent records. He was in trouble continuously, and was placed in a BI room during 8th grade. He had almost completed 9th grade when he was identified as having committed several community crimes. He was sent to _____ in May primarily for psychological help. He received very little. He was released in September and came back. He had missed nearly 6 weeks of school because _____ had not done anything with him in anticipation of his release.
>
> _____ caused quite a stir with his return. He should have been in 10th grade, however, the High School Principal felt it wouldn't be fair to his teachers to help _____ get caught up. He was assigned to the Jr. High BI room (there is no High School BI room) in the morning. He went to the High School for lunch, P.E. and a study hall in the p.m.
>
> We were to receive his assignments and get him caught up. The High School teachers were to assign, correct, and grade. I had to go to the High School and see his teachers. They were very indignant about the whole thing. We waited for his assignments, but they never came. Finally I made the assignments, we got them done, and sent them to the High School. They were never corrected. _____ was given no grades. I decided that I would grade him. _____ did this for almost 8 weeks.
>
> In December _____ broke into a friend's house with the friend's help and stole $75.00. Because the friend was implicated there were no charges. Instead, _____ was sent to another city for foster care.

The case in point is probably fairly typical among situations presenting themselves in the area of behavioral impairment. In the course of working with BI students, worse cases would be encountered as would easier ones.

Certainly, the case reflects a number of the problems presented in previous chapters: lack of understanding and support, gaps in services within education as well as outside of the schools, and lack of internal and interagency communication.

The case also is indicative of the interrelatedness of the problems, a phenomenon which has been alluded to throughout this document. It is difficult to discuss the problem of gaps in the continuum of services within education devoid of a consideration of attitudes, understanding, and support. Similarly, it is not realistic to consider concerns for voids in the continuum of services across agencies without discussion of interagency communication, and attitudes/expectations. The interrelatedness has also been reflected in the presentation of solutions. Inservice, for example, has been identified in several places as an appropriate approach to solving specific problems. Similarly, the creation of interagency coordination teams, the development and dissemination of information exchange procedures and communication among professionals at the building level are offered as possible solutions in more than one instance.

One final note needs to be advanced in closing. While part of the purpose of this document is to act as a stimulus for additional thought and discussion, it also is intended to serve as a call to action on the part of professionals serving behaviorally impaired children and youth, regardless of role or service delivery environment. As indicated previously, the field of behavior impairment, unlike other special needs areas, does not have the benefit of numerous or vociferous advocacy groups. Therefore, it is not merely incumbent upon, but essential that professionals in behavioral impairment take action to remediate the problems confronting the field. Conditions, both attitudinally and economically, no longer afford service providers the luxury of making excuses for the massive problems that exist or passing the responsibility off

to other people. If changes are to be made, professionals in the field, either individually or collectively, must take the responsibility for initiating the necessary action. Only then will the goal of a free, appropriate education for all behaviorally impaired children and youth be achieved.